



**Summary Minutes of the
U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
Advisory Committee on Beginning Farmers and Ranchers
Public Conference
June 23 – 24, 2014**

Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beyerhelm, Chris• Cavanaugh-Grant, Deborah (absent)• Chembezi, Duncan• Conner, Michelle• Creasy, Marcus• Farrar-Houel, Adrienne• Fitzpatrick, Kole• Gerencer, Martha Ann• Gossman, Timothy• Holman, Christopher• Jones-Crabtree, Anna Jean• Keo, Yani• Matteson, Gary• Miller, Maria• Neill, Julie• Scheffert, Peter• Serrano, Tony• Stephenson, Garry• Taylor, Jennifer• Van Dam, Windy	
Date and Time	June 23 - 24, 2014	
Location	<p><i>The Robert and Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts Vanderhoef Studio Theatre University of California at Davis, One Shields Avenue, Davis, CA Public access and listen-only conference lines available</i></p>	
Purpose	The Committee considered the efficiency and value of USDA programs and policies affecting new farmers and ranchers.	
USDA	<p>Honorable Krysta Harden, USDA Deputy Secretary Karis Gutter, USDA Deputy Under Secretary Ronald Harris, Program Director, Natural Resource Conservation Service Glenda Humiston, California State Director, Rural Development Mark Lipson, Policy Advisory, Marketing and Regulatory Program Billy Cox, Program Director, Agriculture Marketing Service Jill Auburn, Program Leader, Research Education and Economics Victor Tolomeo, Director Pacific Region, National Agriculture Statistics Service Lilia McFarland, Program Coordinator, Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Carolyn Parker, Director, Office of Advocacy and Outreach</p>	
Host	Roger Beachy, Executive Director, UC Davis World Food Center	

Day 1 Meeting Summary (June 23, 2014)

Kenya Nicholas, Designated Federal Officer (DFO) for the Advisory Committee on Beginning Farmers and Ranchers (Committee) called the meeting to order. Committee members were asked to introduce themselves and talk about their representative groups and areas of expertise and share their expectations on outcomes of the meeting. This also served as the official roll call (one members was absent as noted above). Member introductions were followed by remarks from Committee Chair, Gary Matteson, followed by the keynote address from the USDA Deputy Secretary Krysta Harden.

Mr. Karis Gutter from the Farm and Foreign Agriculture Service began with a presentation on the current status of the Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs. The Committee considered these and other queries regarding FSA policies and programs:

- How might Individual Development Accounts (IDA) best serve beginning farmers?
- Should FSA launch a micro loan re-lending loan program?
- Should the committee advocate for an increase in the loan limits at FSA?
- Should USDA initiate a beginning farmer and rancher liaison position for each state?

Ronald Harris from the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), followed by a presentation on NRCS programs and policies related to the 2014 Farm Bill which addresses the unique circumstances and concerns of historically underserved individuals and groups, socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, beginning and limited resource farmers and ranchers. Incentives and improved access to U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs and services will be key to implementing NRCA programs going forward.

Glenda Humiston from Rural Development (RD) emphasized RD programs which are geared toward building livable rural communities. Many of RD's programs offer support to beginning farmers and ranchers with some having direct positive impacts, including: Value-Added Producer Grants; Small and Socially Disadvantaged Producer Grants; Business & Industry Guaranteed Loans; and Community Facilities Loan/Grants. RD sought Committee input on streamlining and simplifying the application process for many of their programs; and ensuring accessibility in light of regional challenges such as obstacles to acquiring land due to high costs.

Mark Lipson, an organic and sustainable agriculture advisor, presented on multi-agency initiatives under the *Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food* (KYF2) organic literacy initiative. He sought input from the Committee regarding ongoing issues faced by organic farmers and ranchers, for example:

- Inconsistent certification processes
- Recordkeeping focus and burden
- Expense of certification

- Burden of time that is involved with inspections and maintaining paperwork
- Farms that comply with organic standards avoid certification

The Committee also considered the following:

- What types of local and regional food resources and information are most helpful to beginning farmers and ranchers?
- How can KYF2 leverage successful programs to increase the impact for beginning farmers and ranchers?
- What are the key barriers or challenges hindering beginning farmers and ranchers from utilizing certain programs?

The Committee ended the first day with deliberations and considering ways to begin the process of crafting recommendations. Time was allotted for clarifying questions. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:50 p.m. after several members of the public provided comments.

Day 2 Meeting Summary (June 24, 2014)

DFO Kenya Nicholas opened the meeting and reviewed a few housekeeping details. Mr. Matteson, Committee Chair, introduced the first speaker.

Billy Cox from Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) began with the introduction of Ann Alonzo, Administrator for AMS, who gave a brief presentation via video. Mr. Cox reviewed key aspects of the AMS policies and programs and asked the Committee to weigh in on the following:

- Are stakeholders experiencing difficulty accessing a particular service from AMS and, if so, how might AMS improve this experience?
- How might AMS better utilize current programs to help beginning farmers and ranchers?
- What partnership projects might be created to assist small farmers and ranchers *today*?

Next, Jill Auburn of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, gave a presentation on Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Development Program and sought Committee input and recommendations for the following:

- Features of the program that might be improved while staying within the limits specified by Congress as amended in the 2014 Agriculture Act.
- Elements of the Request for Applications and the application process that could be clarified or improved.
- Timing of the application and award cycle.

The last presentation of the day was from Victor Tolomeo who discussed the tools and statistical information that is available to those who need data on new and beginning farmers and ranchers *nationwide*. Mr. Tolomeo sought the Committee's input on what kinds of data might be useful for those in the industry and what new or different information might be added for the 2017 Census. Another issue was how best to reach and engage new farmers and ranchers for a more robust response to the Census.

The morning ended with a brief presentation from Lilia McFarland, Agency Coordinator for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers. The afternoon was spent creating a framework for recommendations based on information and queries from USDA agency presentations.

Time was allotted for a few clarifying questions. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:50 p.m. after several members of the public were invited to comment.

After some discussion on administrative issues, DFO Kenya Nicholas adjourned the meeting at approximately 4:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kenya Nicholas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kenya" being more prominent than the last name "Nicholas".

Kenya Nicholas
Designated Federal Officer

I certify these summary minutes of the June 23-24, 2014 Advisory Committee on Beginning Farmers and Ranchers public meeting are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Matteson". The signature is written in a cursive style, with the first name "Gary" being the most distinct part of the signature.

Gary Matteson
Chair

Note and Disclaimer: The minutes of this public meeting are a summary only. A full transcript and audio recording of this meeting have been uploaded to the ACBFR Website. The reader is cautioned to not rely on the minutes to represent the final, approved, consensus advice and recommendations offered to the Department. Such advice and recommendations may be found in the final advisories, letters, or reports prepared and transmitted to the USDA from the Committee Chair(s).